

Residential Development

Population and Housing

Gainsboro is one of the few urban neighborhoods in Roanoke that has seen population growth; population increased from 767 in 1990, to 967 in 2000 (U.S. Census). The neighborhood gained 200 residents, in part due to the opening of Our Lady of the Valley Nursing Home which can accommodate 170 residents. Eight Jefferson Place will feature 80 upscale apartments with a capacity of 150 residents, so continued population growth is certain. The majority (73%) of the population is African American. Between 1990 and 2000, there was a slight increase in white and other race/multiracial populations. The home ownership rate in Gainsboro is 41.5%, well below the city rate of 56%.

Population			
	1990	2000	Change
Total Population	890	935	+5%

Racial Composition						
	Gainsboro 1990		Gainsboro 2000		Roanoke 2000	
Race	# people	% distribution	# people	% distribution	# people	% distribution
African American	703	79%	686	73%	25,380	27%
White	183	21%	218	23%	65,848	69%
Other race or multiracial	4	<1%	31	4%	3,686	4%
TOTALS	890	100%	935	100%	94,914	100%

Age Distribution (%*)			
Age bracket	Gainsboro 1990	Gainsboro 2000	Roanoke 2000
0-17 years	20%	24%	23%
18-39 years	27%	23%	31%
40-64 years	19%	23%	31%
65+ years	33%	29%	16%
* percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding			

Housing Tenure						
	Gainsboro 1990		Gainsboro 2000		Roanoke 2000	
Owner Occupied	148	40.5%	149	41.5%	23,637	56.3%
Renter Occupied	217	59.5%	210	58.5%	18,366	43.7%
Total Occupied Housing Units	365	100%	359	100%	42,003	100%
Vacant Housing Units	88		44			

Housing Character

Roanoke's older neighborhoods have a unique character that is defined in part by the design of the housing. While there are many architectural styles in Gainsboro, structures tend to share design features that are essential in defining the character of the neighborhood. Many residents feel that this consistent design character is very important and that it should be protected. Residents are concerned about the design of new infill houses and feel that they should "fit in" with the historic homes of the neighborhood. Furthermore, they feel that compatible design of new homes is essential to attracting new people to the area. Zoning protections such as the H-2, Neighborhood Preservation District, and the NDD, Neighborhood Design District, can be used to help protect the character of the neighborhood. The sections of Patton and Gilmer Avenues east of Jefferson Street currently have the H-2 overlay in place.

Housing Conditions

The 21st Century Challenge study, sponsored by the Roanoke Regional Housing Network, surveyed the exterior conditions of housing units in inner-city neighborhoods of Roanoke, including Gainsboro. The study found that there are considerable amounts of fair to poor housing conditions in the southwestern area of Gainsboro. In addition, an area survey conducted by Roanoke inspectors indicated a concentration of code violations in the southern part of the neighborhood. Like many older neighborhoods, Gainsboro has areas with blighted conditions. Areas with oldest housing stock tend to have more code and maintenance violations, such as outdoor storage, junk cars, and poor property conditions.

The issues associated with vacant lots and infill housing is complex and requires a partnership between the public and private sectors to develop strategies for specific areas. Neighborhood groups are actively working to improve housing conditions in the area. In consideration of development pressures given Gainsboro's location near downtown, residents' concerns center on the continued viability of the residential portions of the neighborhood. Their goals focus on keeping homeowners in the neighborhood, having renters become homeowners, and promoting responsible property ownership. The outcome should be the elimination of destabilizing conditions created by irresponsible rental property owners. Strategies should strive to retain a range of housing options that will permit responsible residents to remain in the neighborhood.

Key Residential Development Opportunities

- **Cherry Avenue:** There are several vacant parcels on Cherry Avenue owned by the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The area has beautiful views of the Roanoke Valley. This site is appropriate for single-family residential or townhouse development. New development in this area should be compatible with the urban design of the historic portions of the neighborhood. The current zoning is RM-2 (multifamily residential). New zoning patterns should provide for single family detached dwellings by right and should require a special exception for duplex or townhouse development.
- **Individual infill lots on Gilmer, Fairfax, Patton, and Harrison Avenues:** The Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority owns nearly half of the vacant land in Gainsboro. Most vacant parcels are very narrow and have steep grades. These parcels are appropriate for single-family or two-family residential development. Infill houses should be carefully designed to ensure compatibility with existing houses. The current zoning is RM-2 (multifamily residential). New zoning patterns should provide for single family detached dwellings by right and should require a special exception for duplex or townhouse development.

Key Residential Development Opportunities

- Old Loudon Avenue: This property fronts on Gainsboro Road and is located behind the Big Brothers and Big Sisters headquarters adjacent to the Coca Cola plant. Due to its proximity to Henry Street, this site is appropriate for multifamily-development. The site has a great view of downtown and is close to the Higher Education Center. The current zoning is C-3 (Central Business District). New zoning for this site should allow for high-density residential development.

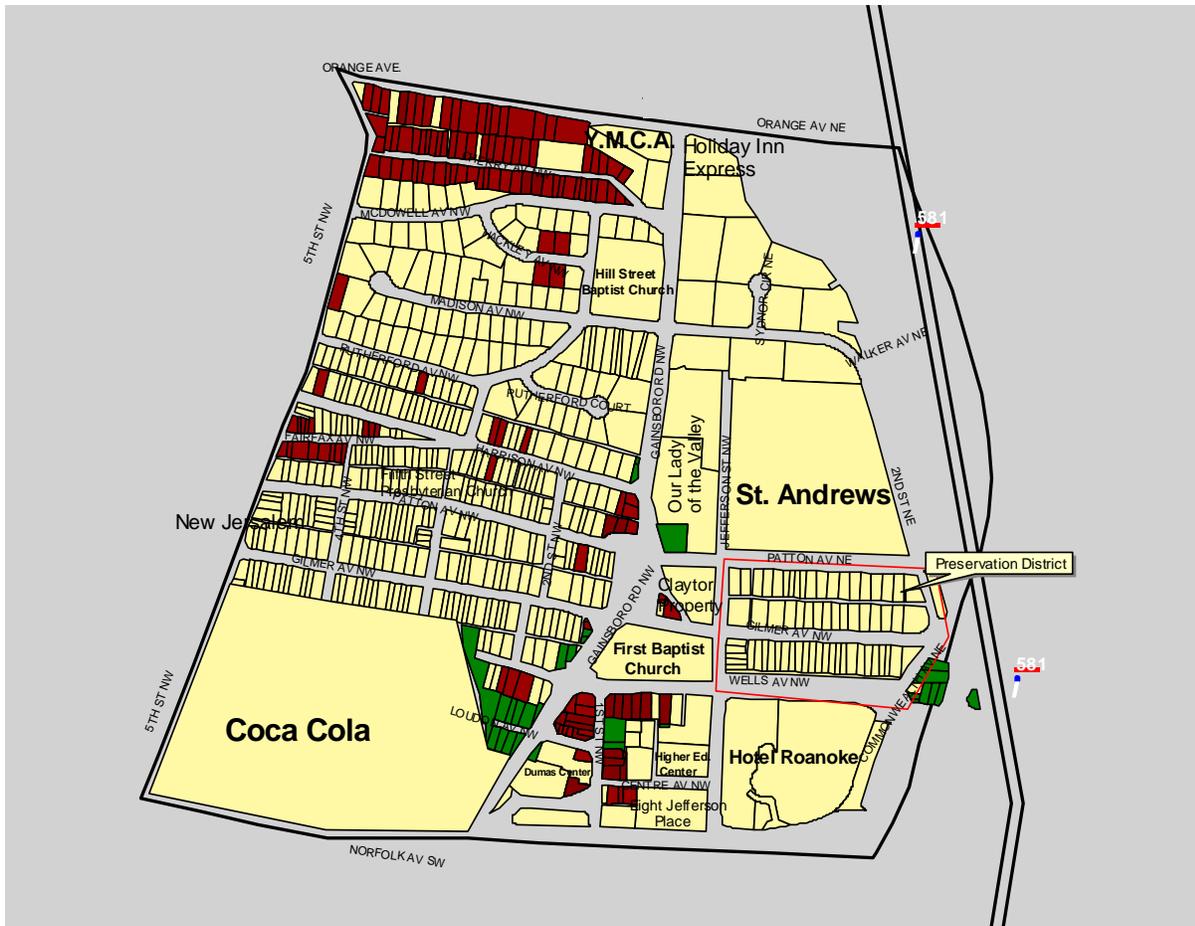
Residential Development Issues

- Concentrations of poor housing and vacant lots
- Owner occupancy rates are low compared to citywide.
- Newer housing in the northwestern portion of the neighborhood is in good to fair condition.
- Over 50% of the lots are vacant.
- 60% of the houses were rated in good condition and 40% were fair to poor (RRHN, June 2001)
- Ownership of vacant lots by the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority is an opportunity to encourage appropriate development. There is potential for a local community development corporation to have an active role in developing housing in partnership with the Housing Authority. Vacant lots can be assembled into "packaged" development projects that may be attractive to private developers.
- Greatest population increases are expected in the 0-17 years and over-65 age brackets.
- Pockets of housing decline and lower rents attract lower income renters and sustain demand for absentee landlords.
- Concerted efforts to market the neighborhood are needed.



Our Lady of the Valley Nursing Home

City of Roanoke & Housing Authority Owned Property



 City - Owned

 Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority

